

JESUS AND THE LAMBS

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*“He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.”
Isaiah 40:11.*

IN the chapter before us, our Savior is described as Jehovah God. He is spoken of as clothed with irresistible power: “He shall come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him”; but, as if to soften a glory far too bright for the weak eyes of the trembling, the prophet introduces the delightful words of the text: “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” Here is divinity; not Jehovah the man of War, but Jehovah the Shepherd of Israel. Here is the fire of deity, but its gentle, warming influence is felt, and the consuming force is veiled. Greatness in league with gentleness, and power linked with affection, now pass before us. Loving-kindness and tender mercy are drawn in their golden chariot by the noble steeds of omnipotence and wisdom. Heroes who have been most distinguished for fury in the fight, have been tender of heart as little children; sharp were their swords to the foe, but their hands are gentle towards the weak. It is the index of a noble nature that it can be majestic as a lion in the midst of the fray, and roar like a young lion on the scene of conflict, and yet have a dove's eye and a maiden's heart. Such is our Lord Jesus Christ; He is the conquering Captain of salvation, but He is meek and lowly of heart.

This morning, in considering the text, we have a special eye to these who are the weaklings among us. Our desire is, as an under-shepherd, to administer consolation to those who are distressed in spirit and feeble in mind, hoping that while we speak, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may speak effectually to them.

I. Our first consideration, this morning, will be the inquiry, WHO ARE THE LAMBS WHICH OUR BLESSED LORD IS SAID TO GATHER AND TO CARRY IN HIS BOSOM?

In a certain sense we may affirm that *all His people are lambs*. In as far as they exhibit the Christian spirit, they are lamb-like. Jesus sends them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. They are a little flock, a guileless people. Just as the lamb was clean and acceptable to God, so is every Christian. As the lamb might be presented in sacrifice, so does every believer present his body as a living sacrifice unto God. As the lamb was the symbol of innocence, so should the believer be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and as the lamb fights not, and has no weapon of offense, so the believer is no brawler, striker, or man of strife. Wars and fights he hates, and follows peace with all men. When he is fully conformed to his Master's will, he resists not evil, but is patient, turning the other cheek when he is struck; he knows that vengeance is God's prerogative, and therefore is slow to retort upon a railing adversary, remembering that Michael the Archangel only replied to the adversary, “The Lord rebuke you.” A lamb is so guileless and unsuspecting that it licks the butcher's hand, and those who seek to destroy it, find it easy work. So have the saints been killed all the day long—they are accounted as sheep for the slaughter; and the accusation of James is true—“You have condemned and killed the just, and he does not resist you.” Those who are of a meek and lamb-like spirit are precisely such as become lovers of the gentle Prophet of Nazareth. Like attracts its like. He is meek and lowly in heart, and therefore those who are like He is, come to Him. The power of His gospel, wherever it is exerted, produces men of such character. Those who came to Christ, when He was upon earth, may have been boisterous enough in their natural dispositions, but after they had received the baptism of His Spirit, they were an inoffensive race. They proclaimed the gospel with boldness, and for their Master they were very valiant, but they rose not in arms against Caesar; they headed no rebellions; they were not competitors in the race for power; they shed no blood even to win their liberties; they were examples of suffering, affliction

and of patience—they were ready to live or to die for the truth, but that truth was love to God and man. Self-pride, greed, wrath as works of the old nature, they sought to mortify, and it was their daily desire to do good unto all men as they had opportunity. Jesus will always gather such lambs. The world hates them and scatters them, the world ridicules and despises them, but Jesus makes them His bosom friends. The world of old hounded them to death, made them pine in the damp of the catacombs of Rome, or perish among the snows of the Alps, but their glorified Lord gathered them by tens of thousands from the prison, the amphitheater, the stake, the bloody scaffold, and in His blessed bosom they rest in congenial company, forever as the Lord's lambs are they glorified with the Lamb of God.

Still, this is not the precise meaning of the text. The word "lamb" frequently signifies the *young*, and our Lord Jesus Christ graciously receives many young persons into His bosom. The ancient teachers of the Jewish law invited no children to gather around them; I suppose there was not a Rabbi in all Jerusalem who would have desired a child to listen to him, and if it had been said of anyone of the Sanhedrim, "that man teaches so as to be understood by a child," he would have thought himself insulted by such a description. But not so our Master! He always had children among His audience—they are often mentioned; in the enumeration of those whom He miraculously fed, we read, "besides women and children." His triumphant entry into Jerusalem included among the most conspicuous of the jubilant throng those children who were heard crying, "Hosanna," in the temple. When Jesus took a little child, and set him in the midst, He had not to go far for the living illustration, for the little children were always near "the holy child Jesus," the great child-man. Our Lord Jesus was so guileless, so gentle; He wore His heart so manifestly upon His sleeve, that though a man in all things masculine and dignified, the childlike nature was eminently conspicuous in Him, and attracted the little ones to itself. We shall never forget the voice of the blessed Savior, the Lord of angels, as He cries, "Allow the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Some in our day mistrust youthful piety, but our Savior lends no countenance to such suspicions. Some cautiously whisper, "Let the pious youth be tried awhile before we believe in his religion; let him be tempted; let him bear the frosts of the world, perhaps the blossoms will drop away and disappoint us." Such was not my Master's way. Cautious, no doubt He was, prudent beyond all human wisdom, but yet always full of love and generosity, and therefore we find Him receiving children, as He has received us, into His kingdom—into the best place in His kingdom—into His loving bosom. Ah, dear children, since you are not too young to die, and to be judged for your idle words and disobedient actions, it is a delightful thing for you that you are not too young to believe in Jesus, nor too young to be saved by His grace! Dear children, I would have you completely saved today, for your tender age is no hindrance to you being forgiven and justified. If you have trusted the great Savior, I tenderly invite you to declare your faith in the Lord Jesus, and to come forward and be joined to the church of Jesus. If indeed you are converted, we dare not refuse you. I hope the church of Jesus will no more think of refusing you than would our Lord Himself. Were Jesus here this morning, He would say, "Allow the little ones to come to Me," and I hope you will be led by the Holy Spirit to come at His call. Only let your youthful hearts be given to Jesus, let your confidence be fixed alone upon what He suffered for sinners upon the cross of Calvary, and you need not be afraid. There is the same Christ for you as for the gray heads. The promises are as much yours as your father's, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit shall flow as sweetly into the little vessels of your hearts as into the hearts of those who have known the Savior these 50 years. Hear the words of the Good Shepherd, "I love them who love Me, and they who seek Me early shall find Me."

But, again, by lambs we may quite as properly understand *young converts*, those who begin to have religious impressions, those who but of late have repented of sin, and been driven from all confidence in their own good works. They are not yet established in the faith; they only know, perhaps, one or two great doctrines; they are very far from being able to teach others; they need to sit at the feet of Jesus rather than to serve Him in activities requiring talent and knowledge. Their faith is very apt to waver. Poor things, if they are assailed by arguments they are soon perplexed, and though they cling to the truth of God, yet it is a hard struggle for them; they cannot give a reason for the hope that is in them, though they are not deficient in meekness and fear. Our Lord Jesus Christ never discarded a single follower on account of his being juvenile in the faith. Far from it! He has been pleased, in His infinite tenderness, to look especially after these. A young man came to Him who was not then converted—probably never

was—and yet though the good work in him was so immature, that it may have been compared to the morning cloud and the morning dew which pass away, yet our Savior, looking upon him, *loved* him; for He delights to see the hopeful token, however slender; He quenches not the smoking flax, and breaks not the bruised reed. He did not repulse the self-righteous youth. He was ignorant of the very first principle of the gospel, namely, justification by faith and not by works, yet, since he desired to do right, and was evidently sincere, our Lord Jesus Christ further instructed Him. I earnestly pray Christians to imitate my Master in this. Where you see anything of Christ, encourage it. You may observe much that you lament, but, I pray you, do not kill the child because its face is dirty; do not cut down the trees because in spring they have no fruit upon them. Be thankful that they make a show of buds which may come to fruit by-and-by. It is not policy in the Christian church to be severe upon those who are in *any* measure inclined towards Christ! It is inhumanity, it is worse cruelty than the sea monsters, for even they draw out the breasts to their young; but some men seem determined to crush all the hopes of the babes in divine grace. Because they grow not at once to the full stature of men, therefore they say, “Away with them! They are not fit to be received into the church of Christ.” My dear friends, if there are any of you weak and doubtful, just struggling into the divine Life, who have only for the last few days known anything at all concerning the love of Christ, if there are in you any good thing towards the Lord God of Israel—a desire, an earnest longing, or a little faith—my Master will not be unkind to you, for “He gathers the lambs in His arm, and carries them in His bosom.”

Furthermore, we feel sure that we shall not strain the text if we say that the lambs in the flock are *those who are naturally of a weak, timid, trembling disposition*. There are many persons who, if they were kept constantly in the hothouse of Christian encouragement, would still feel themselves frostbitten, for their minds are naturally heavy and forlorn. If they make music at all, they dwell evermore upon the bass, and keep not their harps long from the willows. When the promise comes with power to their souls and they enjoy a few bright sunshiny days, they are very happy in their own quiet way, like the man in the valley of humiliation, singing, “He who is down need fear no fall,” but they never climb the mountains of joy, or lift up their voice with exultation. They have a humble hope and a gracious reliance, and they are often in practical Christianity among the best in the church, and yet, alas for them, their days of mirth are few; like the elder brother in the parable, their father has never given them a kid that they may make merry with their friends. Now, such persons make but poor company, and yet every Christian ought to seek their society, for there is something to be learned from them; and, moreover, their needs demand our sympathetic attention. Do not think that Jesus seeks out the strong saints to be His companions to the neglect of the little ones. Ah, no! “He shall gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom.”

Once more, the lambs are *those who know but little of the things of God*. This class is not so much desponding as ignorant, ignorant after a world of teaching. When we meet with persons who do not understand the doctrines of grace, after we have done our best to instruct them, we must not feel vexed with them; but reflect that our Master said to Philip, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?” He was a much better teacher than we shall ever be, and therefore if He was gentle with His dull scholars, we must not be harsh. Some believers, after years of scriptural teaching, get nothing into their heads except a mass of confusion; they are in a fog, poor souls; they mean right enough, but they do not know how to put their meaning in order. Oftentimes you will find our friends confounding things that differ, mingling justification with sanctification, or the fruits of the Spirit with the foundation of their confidence; this is the result of an uneducated understanding. Such persons are to be pitied, because they become very readily the victims of designing men, who lead them into error. But they are not to be shunned; they are not to be scolded; they are not to be denounced. Proud men may do so, for they are short-tempered, but the large-hearted Son of God declares that to them He will act as a shepherd, and will gather them in His arms. If Thomas will not learn by any other means, Jesus will condescend to his childish weaknesses, and let him put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wounded side; for, as a nurse is tender with her children, and as a good schoolmaster will teach his child the same thing 20 times if he has not learnt it at the 19th lesson, so Jesus will do; adding line upon line, and precept upon precept—here a little, and there a little—that we may be nurtured and nourished in the faith once delivered to the saints.

To whichever class any of you may belong, let my text be sweet to your taste, and may the Holy Spirit cheer you by it.

II. But we must now pass on. How DOES JESUS SHOW THIS SPECIAL CARE FOR THE WEAK ONES? He does this, according to the text, in two ways.

First, by *gathering* them at the season of the year when the little lambs are born. It is interesting to observe the shepherd's careful watch. When he finds the little ones in the cold frost, almost ready to die, how tender he is! Why, the shepherd's kitchen fireside is, for a time, the lamb's own nursery. Wife and children are put aside for a while, and the warm place is all given up to the little lambs; there they lie in the warmth, till they have strength enough to return to their mothers. So when a man is spiritually born unto God, he is frequently so desponding, his faith is so weak, and he is altogether so ready to die, that he needs the tender mercy from on high to visit him. There may be someone here who has been converted to God during the last week, but no kind Christian knows of it; nobody has spoken to him to gather him up; but, lonely one, be not dismayed, Jesus will come to you; He will be a present Help in this, your hour of trouble. Now that you are like a new lit candle which is easily blown out, He will shield you from the breath of evil.

When the flock is on the march, it will happen, unless the shepherd is very watchful, that the lambs will lag behind. Those great Syrian flocks which feed in the plains of Palestine, have to be driven many miles because the grass is scant, and the flocks are numerous, and in long journeys the lambs drop one by one for weariness, and then the shepherds carry them. So it is in the progress of the great Christian church; persecuted often, always more or less molested by the outside world, there are some who lag—they cannot keep up the pace—the spiritual warfare is too severe for them. They love their Lord; they would, if they could, be among the foremost; but, through the cares of this world, through weakness of mind, through a lack of spiritual vigor. They become lame and are ready to perish; such faint hearts are the peculiar care of their tender Lord.

At other times, the lambs do worse than this. They are of a skittish nature, and feeling the natural vigor of new-born life, they are not content to keep within bounds as the older sheep do, but they betake themselves to wandering, so that at the close of the day the lambs cost the shepherd much trouble. "Where are those lambs?" he says. "Where are they? The sheep are right enough, but where are the lambs?" What will the good man do? Leave them, and say, "They have worn out my patience"? No—he will gather them. So are there many immature Christians, whose minds are hung loosely, and are unstable as water. What a trouble some of you are to those who love you! When you rise to a little faith, you sink into unbelief before the next day. You shift your opinions as often as the moon changes, and are of one mind never longer than a week. You follow everybody who chooses to put up his finger to beckon you away; you leave the good old paths to seek other pastures. Sometimes you are with the so-called brethren; the next day the Church of England; next, the Dissenters, and, perhaps, if the Roman Catholics were to try you, you would be ready to go with them in the hope of finding comfort. It is the nature of the lambs that they should do so. But will the Good Shepherd be angry with you, and cast you off? Not at all, for Jesus gathers the lambs, and when He puts His great loving arm over them, they cannot wander anymore; when His love constrains them, and they come to the full enjoyment of His gospel truth, then they are content to remain near His blessed person.

When the text says, "He gathers the lambs," does it mean that Jesus gathers poor tremblers to His precious blood, and washes them and gives them peace? Does it mean that He gathers them to His precious truth, and illuminates their minds, and instructs their understanding? Is it not meant He gathers them to Himself and unites them to His glorious person, making them members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones? Oh, this is a delightful gathering! His word cannot do it alone, His ministers cannot do it, but *His arm* can; the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, which is like the right arm of the Good Shepherd, gathers together these weakest and most wandering ones, and puts them safe into the blessed pavilion of His bosom.

But the text says, after He gathers them, He *carries them in His bosom*. That is, first of all, *the safest place*, for the wolf cannot get them there. Furious and impertinent as hell always is, yet who can hope to take His bosom treasure away from Jesus? You weak ones, how secure you are in Him, though so exposed to danger in yourselves.

The bosom; why that is the *tenderest place*; it is where we should put only a poor creature that has a broken bone and could not bear to be roughly touched. The bosom, that is the *easiest place*; it makes one wish to always be a lamb, if one could always ride in that chariot. Delightful is the weakness which casts us upon such gracious strength. “He carries the lambs in His bosom.” Why, that is the *most honorable place*. We would not put into our bosom that which we despised. We would not think of carrying there anything which was not choice and dear, and exceedingly precious. So, you weak ones, though you think yourself to be less than nothing, and are nothing in yourself, yet you shall have all the security which the heart of Deity can give you, all the comfort that the love of Christ can pour upon you, all the honor and dignity which divine nearness, and fellowship, and dearness of His love can bestow upon a poor mortal. Rejoice, you lambs, that you have such a Shepherd to carry you near His heart!

To enlarge upon this, let me observe that our Lord shows His care for the lambs in *His teachings* which are very simple, mostly in parables, full of winning illustrations, but always plain. The gospel is a poor man’s gospel. You need not be a Plato, or a Socrates to understand it; the peasant is as readily saved as the philosopher. He who has but a small amount of brains may understand that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that whoever believes in Him is not condemned. If Christ had not cared for the weak ones, He would not have come with so plain a message, for He comprehends all mysteries, and knows the deep things of God.

Moreover, He is pleased to *reveal His teachings gradually*. He did not tell His disciples all the truths of God at once, because they were not able to bear it. He led them from one truth to another. He brings forth milk before He offers strong meat. Some of you weak ones are very stupid; you want to begin with the hard truths first; you long to comprehend election before you understand that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; but you should not do so, for our Lord would have you begin with these lessons, “I am a sinner: Christ stood in the sinner’s place: I trust Him, I am saved.” After you have learned this first alphabet of the gospel you shall learn the rest. It is a token of the Lord’s love to the weak, that He does not hang our salvation upon *our* understanding mysteries; He does not rest our ground of confidence upon our orthodoxy, or our knowledge of the more sublime truths of God, but if we know the power of His precious blood—whether we understand His electing love or not—we are saved. It is well to learn all that we can, but here is a fair display of Christ’s love, that if we do but trust in Him, although we may be much in the dark, we are nevertheless secure.

The Lord’s gentleness to the lambs is shown in this that *His experimental teachings are all by degrees too*. He does not teach the young beginner all the depravity of his heart which he will have to feel in later life; He does not allow the young convert to be molested by Satanic insinuations, as he may be when he becomes stronger; nor does He usually allow temporal trouble to befall so heavily on those who are but fledglings in the nest. He always suits the trial to the strength, and the burden to the back. I am quite certain if my Master had allotted me some of my present trials 15 years ago, I would have been ready to despair, and yet at the present I am supplied with strength enough to bear them, though I have none to spare. Blessed be the Lord Jesus for His kind consideration of our many infirmities. He never overdrives His lambs. Though a certain form of experience is very useful, yet He does not send it to us while by reason of backwardness in grace we are unable to bear it.

The divine gentleness of our Master has been shown in *the solemn curses with which He effectually guarded the little ones*. Observe how sharp they are! “But whoso shall offend one of those little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” To offend is to put a stumbling block in the way. How solemn is that warning, “Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones!” He must have loved them, or He would not have set such a hedge of fire around them!

How many of *the promises are made on purpose for the weak*. I encourage you to make your own study of them, and so I shall not repeat them this morning. The precious word of God will show you how the gracious word is framed to the peculiar condition of distress and weakness under which the lambs are suffering. The Holy Spirit, with divine art, brings home to the heart promises which had never else appeared to be so full of grace.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ’s tenderness to His people is further shown in this, that *what He requires of them is easy*. “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy, and

My burden is light.” He does not command the babes to preach; He does not send the weak believers to the forefront of the battle, as David did Uriah, that they may be slain; He gives them no other burden than this—that they will trust Him, and give Him all their heart. A yoke, how easy!

He shows His gentleness, moreover, in that *He accepts the least service that these little ones may offer*. A faint prayer, a sigh, a tear—He will receive all these as much as the most eloquent pleadings of an Elijah. The broken alabaster box, and the ointment poured out shall be received though they come from one who has no former character with which to back the gift; and the two mites that make a farthing shall not be turned down. The best work sincerely done out of love to Jesus—in dependence upon Him—He accepts most cheerfully, and thus shows to us His real tenderness for the lambs. He has bid His ministers to be careful of the little ones; “Feed My lambs,” He said to Peter, because He would have all His ministers do so. Those shall find themselves winning their Master’s frown who despise the weaklings, but those shall have a smile from His face who, with tender care, shall nurture them. Jesus, my Lord, speaks to the desponding and timid ones this morning, and He cries—

*“Trust Me, and fear not; your life is secure;
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power;
In love I correct you, your soul to refine,
To make you at length in My likeness to shine.
The foolish, the fearful, the weak are My care,
The helpless, the homeless, I hear their sad prayer:
From all their afflictions My glory shall spring,
And the deeper their sorrows, the louder they’ll sing.”*

I have thus shown to you, as well as I am able, the tender heart of my Lord towards the lambs.

III. In the third place, let us answer this question, WHY THIS CARE OF CHRIST TOWARDS THE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK? The answer is, because they need it, and He loves them, and therefore shall they receive according to their necessities.

But why is He so particularly anxious to comfort them? Surely if He lost a lamb or two, it would be no loss among so many, and if one of the feeble minds should perish, it would be no great consequence when a multitude that no man can number shall be saved! The answer is plain—the *weak are as much redeemed by the blood of Christ as the strong*. When the redemption money was paid by the Jews, it was said, “The rich shall give no more, and the poor shall give no less, because every man’s soul is of equal value before the eternal God.” The meanest child of God has been as truly bought with the blood of Christ, and cost the Lord as much to buy him as the brightest of apostles, or the boldest of confessors! A man will not lose a thing which cost him his blood. The soul of a beggar, if it were put into the scale, would outweigh ten thousand worlds—and when that beggar’s soul has been redeemed by the wounds of Jesus, depend upon it, Jesus Christ will not lose it.

In the newborn child of God *there are peculiar beauties* which are not so apparent in others. It is a matter of taste, I suppose, which is the more beautiful, the lamb or the sheep; but I think the most of us would select the lamb. There is a charm in young creatures, and so there are traits of character in weak and young believers which are extremely delightful. You miss in later life the first love of the beginner in the heavenly pilgrimage. True, there are other and more substantial beauties, but the first blushes and smiles are gone. Have you not, when you have grown older, wished that you possessed the same tenderness of conscience which you had at first, that you had felt the same simplicity of faith? Have you not desired to enjoy that same intense delight in the service of God’s house which you enjoyed during the first few months after your new birth? You have other graces now; you have virtues more useful in the battle of life, but yet there were beauties then which Jesus Christ admired, and which He would not allow to be soiled.

Jesus has such care for the weak ones, because *they will become strong one day*. All great graces were once little graces; all great faith must have once been little faith. It is always first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Mountain-moving faith was once a trembling thing. Kill the lambs? Then where will the sheep be? Slaughter the innocents? Then where shall Bethlehem find her men? Destroy the children? Then from where shall the warriors come who march in ranks to the battle? Jesus sees the weak ones not as they are, but as they *are to be*. He discerns the complete man in the babe of grace.

Moreover, my brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ's *suretyship engagements* require that He should preserve the weakest as well as the strongest. God will require at Christ's hand every one of the elect. "Yours they were, and You gave them to Me," said our Lord. He is to present them faultless before His presence with exceedingly great joy. Just as Laban required every sheep from Jacob's hand, or else Jacob must bear the loss forever, so will God require at our Shepherd's hand every sheep, or He must forever dishonor His suretyship engagement. But it shall never be. He will be true to His word, and say, "Of all that You have given Me have I lost none." When a secretary delivers up his accounts, he is very pleased if it can be said by the auditors, "We have found them correct to a single farthing." But suppose he had said, "Well, there are slight errors, for I never took notice of the pence, I thought them such trifles that if I looked to the pounds it was quite enough." What would be thought of him? Who would trust him? It is the type of an honest man that he is correct to a farthing. If Jesus should bring to eternal glory all who are great in grace, but neglect the weakest, it would dishonor His great name. His honor is pledged to preserve the very weakest of the flock—

*"Shepherd of the chosen number,
They are safe whom You do keep.
Other shepherds faint and slumber,
And forget to watch the sheep.
Watchful Shepherd!
You are awake while others sleep."*

Besides His suretyship engagements, there are *His promises*. He has declared that whoever believes in Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life. That promise is not to the strong only, but to the weak also. He has said, "None shall pluck them out of My hand." Now, He does not say, "None shall pluck the great ones, but may pluck the little ones." No, "None shall pluck *them*," that is, any of them! They are all saved, and all *equally* saved, because their safety does not depend upon their growth or their vigor—it depends on the strength of *His* arm, and the infallibility of His purpose. The sick and sorrowful inhabitants of Jerusalem are secured by the munitions of divine strength, and the bastions of everlasting love as much shelter the little child in the streets as the men that go forth to war.

We may be quite sure the tender Savior will take care of the lambs because *compassion argues that if any should be watched it should be these*. Cast away His people because they are timid, and trembling, and fearful? God forbid! Yonder is a mother who has a numerous family of children. My dear mother, may I argue with you? If you must neglect one of your children, shall I tell you which it should be? It should be that one which is lame in the feet, and has always been so sickly. Why, I think I see the mother looking at me angrily—"Stop," she says, "such shameful talk! That very one I look after with the most anxiety; if I did neglect one, it would be the big boy, grown up, and able to take care of himself, but that poor little dear! I could not forsake him; I carry him in my bosom from morning to night. If there is one whom I am most tender over, it is just that very one." The instincts of our nature tell us that. The beatings of Jesus' heart are towards the trembling ones. When should a man forget or forsake his spouse? Never under any conceivable circumstances, but certainly not when she is sick or sorrowful. Shall he sue in the Divorce Court against her because she is afflicted, and full of pains and griefs? Is she to be cast out of doors because her spirits are broken? Only villainy, alone, could dictate such an argument, and rest assured, beloved, such an argument would have no tolerance with the Well-Beloved.

If you are in Jesus Christ, rest assured that His love will not desert you. It would be a very deplorable thing for every believer in the whole world if it were announced that the least believer should perish. If it should be proclaimed by sound of trumpet by some angelic messenger, that the Good Shepherd intended to cast off one of the least of His flock, though it were but *one*, I do not know what conclusion *you* would draw from it, my dear hearer, but mine would be this, "Then He will cast *me* off." I should feel at once that all the grounds of my security were gone—that *I* might be the castaway. Even if but one, why not I? Would not you feel the same, and where would any of us have any room for comfort? After the one announcement, so contrary to the promise, we might expect another, because in weakness, or in ignorance—if anything in the lamb-like nature is to destroy one of us—then of course, the next, and the next, and the next, and the next may perish. If a man has many creditors, and he says, "I will not pay this one," we all think perhaps he will not pay the next, and the next, and the next; and if God does not keep His promise to the very least, then not to the one next above the least, and so on to none at all. In fact,

the whole blood-bought church of God may go to hell if but one goes there, and if the most wandering and backsliding shall be cast into hell, then the whole will go. If the ship goes down enough to drown one man on board, she would drown the whole company. There is no safety for any of the ship's company unless there is safety for *all* on board. So, heir of heaven, looking at the consequences that would come from the ruin of the least, believe firmly that the Keeper of Israel will gather you with His arm, and carry you in His bosom.

IV. We shall conclude when we have made a PRACTICAL CONCLUSION.

What then? Why, first of all, let us gather the lambs for Christ. I am persuaded there are many who are not in church fellowship who ought to be, but who, perhaps, will never come forward unless they receive an encouraging word from some of their Christian friends. It is of the first importance that they should be gathered to Christ—*He* has done that for them. It is in the next degree important that they should be gathered into His church. May I therefore ask all of you who owe anything to my Lord, to make some kind of acknowledgment of your debt, by looking after those who need a helping hand? The Lord, speaking of His people says, “I taught Israel to go, taking him by the arms.” You know what that means; you have done that with your children when you taught them to walk, holding them up by the arms. Do the same for your Master's little ones; teach some of these beginners to go, holding them up by encouragements. Did not someone do as much for you once? Do you not remember a kind friend who cheered and instructed you? Return your obligation to the Christian church by doing the same. I earnestly pray to see, during the next few months, a very large ingathering into our church of such as shall be saved. We do not want those who are *unconverted* to be added to the church—there is a step *before* that—they must first *give themselves* to Christ. But we do want as many as really belong to our Lord and Master to come into the fellowship of the faithful, and to share in the privileges of the church of God.

Next, let us learn from the text to carry in our bosoms those who are gathered. We have gathered many together into the church, but that is not all we must do—that is only the *beginning* of what riper Christians should count it to be their office to do towards the young. Every young Christian is presented to the Christian church just as Moses was presented to his mother by Pharaoh's daughter, with this commission, “Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.” It is not possible that two pastors, or 20 pastors, should be able to visit and instruct all the members of such a church as this, and the lack must be supplied by you, my brothers, who have known the Lord these years, and by you, my sisters, who have become matrons in our Jerusalem. May I entreat you, by the love of Him who gave Himself for you, by all the tenderness of the heart of Christ, if there are any consolations of the Spirit, seek out your fellow members who may be weak in faith and downcast in mind, and speak comfortably to them. Tell them that their warfare is accomplished, that their sin is pardoned; point them to the Lord Jesus; unveil His beauties to them; make them, as far as you can, to understand with all the saints what are the heights and depths that they may grow in divine grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I trust that this sermon may minister comfort to mourners; but as for those who believe not in Christ at all, I can administer to them no comfort except by reminding them of this one fact—that it is *not too late* for them to trust in Jesus, and if they do so—however long they may have delayed, the door is not closed! May they enter before the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 40.

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